

Surprises and Choices

by Clara Minutes

Hermione Granger is in hiding. After shopping for food, she finds an unexpected visitor in her flat. Written for snarkyroxy in the Winter round of the SSHG_exchange.

Chapter 1

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Finding food these days was hard. Hermione had just come back to her basement flat after spending most of the day out food hunting. The remaining members of the Order were underground, literally. After Albus Dumbledore's murder, Harry decided to rush off and kill Voldemort as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, Harry never did think things through. Harry fought hard against Voldemort, but in the end, the Dark side won.

Hermione sighed as she started the painstaking process of lifting the enchantments on her door. Five minutes later, she pushed the door open and let herself into the flat.

She made her way into the hall, dropped her bag, and slid off her shoes. Greeting Crookshanks, she took the miniature bags of food out of her coat pocket and headed for the kitchen. Rounding the corner, she stopped dead in her tracks because seated at the table with a cup of tea was none other than Severus Snape.

Before she could as much as blink, her wand fell neatly into his outstretched hand. Hermione hadn't noticed him move.

"Good evening, Miss Granger," he said, voice barely above a whisper.

Hermione was frantically trying to find a way out of this situation. Severus Snape was a dangerous man. He'd proved as much by killing Albus Dumbledore, and then again at the recent battle.

"I'm not here to harm you. I could already have done so if that were my reason for being here." He raised an eyebrow at her and motioned for her to take a seat.

She bristled at the gesture. *How dare he! This is my home*, she thought fervently.

"I prefer to stand. And what on earth are you doing here? This is my house. It's supposed to be safe from Death Eaters like you," she spat at him, deciding to stand against the counter instead of taking the seat Snape had indicated.

"Miss Granger, you should be more careful of how you speak. Do you truly think I would be here if I were a Death Eater? Use that vast intelligence of yours for once."

Hermione was annoyed at his comments but refused to take the bait. "Snape, you have yet to answer my question. What in the hell are you doing here?"

Snape let his eyes travel over her, taking in her slightly disheveled look, before answering, "I'm hiding of course. Come now, Miss Granger, even you should have been able to figure that out."

Hermione glared and crossed her arms over her chest, feeling self-conscious. "If you're hiding, who or what are you hiding from? And of all the places, why my flat?"

"I will not answer your questions until you start behaving like a mature human being. Now, have a seat." Snape gestured to the chair again, watching her.

"I'd prefer to stand. Answer the questions, Snape." Hermione had begun to pace, moving across the length of the kitchen and back.

"I'm here to tell someone about what is going to happen."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"I have information that will help you understand your new position in the world. Also, Fenrir Greyback would love to sink his teeth into me."

"I don't know what you're talking about, but it had better be good, Snape. You've broken into my house, taken my wand, and drank my tea." She slowly made her way to the empty chair at the table.

"All *Mudbloods* are to report to the Dark Lord's headquarters by tomorrow night. You will become slaves. The half-bloods are going to become menial labor workers. All pure-bloods that have not shown favor to the Dark Lord are to be killed on sight. Following me, Miss Granger?" Snape asked, watching her face intently.

Instead of voicing an answer, she waited for him to continue.

"You will be a slave for the Dark or you will be killed. What would you prefer?" He paused, but continued when she didn't answer right away. "I am here to offer you a deal. I am in good standing with the Dark Lord; therefore, I can keep you relatively safe. I want you to be my slave."

Hermione felt the color drain from her face as she listened to Snape explain her new status. "What exactly will I be forced to do as your slave?" Despite her best efforts a slight tremble invaded her voice.

"That depends. You will be required to do some work and take orders from your Master. If you choose to take my advice and become my slave, I give you my word that I will not be unnecessarily harsh. That does not mean that you will have an easy time of it, Miss Granger. People will stop by and I will be forced to act in certain ways."

"What of the others? Have you warned them as well?" Hermione asked, looking at her folded hands on the table.

"No, you were the only one I could find," he replied softly.

"So it is my job to tell the others? When will all of this happen?"

"Within the week. I hope you make a wise decision. There are others that want you as theirs. I wish you to know that they will not show you any mercy."

"Why me?" A confused look crossed Hermione's face.

Snape shifted slightly in his seat before responding, "The Malfoys for one. They are almost tripping over themselves trying to convince the Dark Lord they deserve you. Both Lucius and Draco are willing to 'share'. Fenrir Greyback is another that wants you for himself. That is part of the reason I'm in hiding. He knew that I wanted to keep you, and he is determined to stop that from happening. He's been lurking lately; I suspect that he is trying to catch me unawares." He abruptly stopped speaking as if he thought he had said too much.

She was worried about what his response could mean. He hadn't answered her question; instead, he chose to deliberately avoid it. She shook her head, following the wood patterns in the table with her eyes.

"I don't know what to say. I don't trust you at all, Snape. You murdered your mentor. What kind of person does that and feels no remorse? I was the one that always believed in you while I was in school. After you did that, my trust was shattered. I will need to speak to the remaining members of the Order. Since you know where I am, I expect you back tomorrow. I will have some sort of answer by then," Hermione explained, meeting Snape's eyes for the first time that night. Unshed tears made her eyes shine, as well as showing her inner turmoil.

The frantic meeting of the remaining Order members was held earlier that day. A decision was reached that everyone that was able would find some safe place to hide. Hermione chose to try her luck with Snape. The Order was strongly against her idea, but she would not be persuaded. Her argument was that Snape wouldn't have put himself into a situation that could get him killed unless there was a good reason for it. And, honestly, the Malfoys and Fenrir scared her far more than Snape ever did.

She shook her head to rid herself of those thoughts as she unlocked the enchantments on the door to her flat. She hoped that Snape would already be there so they could get this business out of the way. She was not disappointed to see him sitting at her kitchen table with a pot of tea. He looked completely comfortable seated at her table. She slipped off her shoes before moving toward the kitchen.

He looked up at her as she entered and motioned her to sit. He didn't take her wand this time, which surprised Hermione.

She took her seat and waited for him to speak. A hot cup of tea had been poured for her.

"Miss Granger, have you reached a decision?" he asked, his dark eyes watching her for any sort of reaction.

"Yes, I have spoken to the remaining members of the Order. I am the only one that chose to come willingly. The others are going deeper into hiding. They would rather be dead than captured by Death Eaters." She paused and took a sip of the tea that he had poured for her. "I don't want you to think that I believe you or think you are trustworthy quite the opposite is true."

Snape nodded and said, "So you are choosing to come with me?"

"That's what I said, Snape," Hermione said, her eyes holding his gaze. She looked fiercely determined.

"Very well, gather your belongings and be ready to go in the morning. I will be back then to take you to the Dark Lord." Snape rose and made a show of cleaning his tea cup. He turned to face her, gave a small bow, and made his way to the door.

"Oh, and, Miss Granger, you made the right decision," he said before he shut the door and was gone.

Author's notes: Thank you to JackieJLH for beta reading! I wrote this for the SSHG exchange. I'm contemplating adding to it, but that's not a certainty.

Please take the time to let me know what you think. I'm always trying to improve.